



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

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Ref: DO378-14
November 5, 2014

Harold Hunter
1755 Moffit Gulch Road
Bozeman, MT 59715

Dear Mr. Hunter:

In my correspondence to you dated March 15, 2014, I addressed your concerns with range conditions in the upper Yellowstone and discussed Fish, Wildlife & Parks' FWP) role in addressing this issue. I noted our very liberal hunting seasons which were successful in reducing elk numbers to within objective in Hunting District 313, as well as our current efforts to expand bison harvest through state and tribal hunting. At that time your concerns were focused on Yellowstone National Park, which is out of FWP's jurisdiction. Your recent letter reiterates some of the same concerns, as well as, additional concerns with the portion of Gardiner Basin north of Yellowstone Park and the Dome Mountain Wildlife Management Area (WMA). I understand you met with our Region 3 Plant Ecologist Bob Harrington to discuss your specific concerns, and that he shared with you his findings from long term vegetation monitoring on Dome Mountain WMA that clearly show no indication of range deterioration, with all ecological processes functioning within normal range.

In response to public concern with the impact of expanded bison tolerance to range conditions in Gardiner Basin, we have worked with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and Montana State University (MSU) to develop a research proposal. Phase 1 of this research project is underway, involving a range health assessment being conducted by USFS and MSU. It will take some time before we get results, but it is important to carefully assess the situation and determine whether there is any cause for concern. If results of this study indicate there are problems with range condition as you believe, then we will consider what management actions or habitat manipulations might be appropriate to address the problems, or if additional research is necessary to better understand the problem.

In terms of FWP's role in assisting landowners with managing wildlife conflicts on their lands, FWP can and does assist landowners. Our primary tool to assist landowners with managing wildlife on their land is hunting. If a landowner provides access for public hunting, we have the ability to send license holders to the landowner, and if the problem is widespread we have the ability to adjust seasons to increase harvest over a larger area. If this is not effective we have the option to provide damage hunts, and/or stackyard fencing. If a landowner is unwilling to provide access for hunting, our ability to assist is very limited, and over the larger scale if there is restricted hunting access in an area, our ability to reduce numbers is compromised. Range

management on private lands is out of the scope of our resources and mission; however, the county extension offices have the resources and expertise to provide this service.

In terms of moose on your property, we would be happy to direct moose license holders to you if you would like to provide hunting opportunity in order to reduce moose numbers and/or discourage moose presence on your property. As moose season is currently open, we can send letters to license holders immediately. Please get in touch with the Bozeman office (994-4042) if you would like to request hunters.

Sincerely,



for M. Jeff Hagener
Director

c: Sam Sheppard
Karen Loveless